



Citizen Advisory Group Meeting

December 10, 2009

Draft Meeting Highlights

Citizen Advisory Group Attendees: Madeline Campos, Martha Edwards, Walter Fields, Karla Hammer-Knotts, Barry James, Andy Munn, Patrick Pierce, Orlanzo Ross, Shelley Schiff, Frank Voortmans, and David Wiggins

Planning Department Staff: Alberto Gonzalez, John Howard, Crissy Huffstickler, Michelle Jones, Alysia Osborne, Bryman Suttle, and Brent Wilkinson

Planning Commissioners: Eric Locher

Other City and County Staff: Brian Horton, Charlotte Department of Transportation; Andy Gryminski, Charlotte Department of Transportation; and Ramond Robinson, Charlotte Area Transit System

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Brent Wilkinson, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department, welcomed advisory group members; proceeded with introductions; reviewed draft meeting highlights from the November 19 meeting; and called attention to the back of the agenda which restated the draft vision and listed the opportunities and constraints associated with Land Use, Community Design, and Transportation for the Steele Creek area. He then opened the floor to any general questions for staff. There were none.

Discussion of Area Plan Process

Mr. Brent Wilkinson asked the Advisory Group members for feedback on ways the area planning process could be enhanced. The following is an inventory of those comments:

- The last meeting facility was too cold and small
- The meeting location should always be in the study area
- CAG member expectations should be better explained and better linked to the process schedule
- Too much emphasis on education rather than CAG feedback/input
- Some feel that their input is moot because they believe the plan has already been formulated
- Concern over how much of their input will be used in the end result
- Hoping that in the near future all the dots will be connected since the focus has been primarily oriented on education thus far
- Staff should provide beverages or at the very least water
- Concern over how proactive staff has been in getting the full complement of stakeholders (i.e. business tenants)
- Staff should send out the upcoming agenda and minutes from the last meeting always in advance of the next meeting
- Would like more detailed information to take home with them instead of having to visit the website for everything
- Would like a copy of the process flow chart and important meeting dates at the beginning of the process
- Concerned that no Council members have been present
- The market analysis should be presented in terms the audience can understand (i.e. fact sheet)
- Concerned it is too late for others to get involved once the CAG process has started

Existing Conditions

Land Use

Ms. Alysia Osborne, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department, provided the group with some background information on growth and development in the Steele Creek area to set the stage for the development of a land use concept map as well as for discussions on potential transportation and community design policies for the area. Specifically, she reviewed the area's existing adopted future land use, existing land use, existing zoning, and development activity.

Transportation

Mr. Brian Horton, Charlotte Department of Transportation, provided some base information for the area illustrating significant population and employment growth projections for the area by 2035. He then reviewed the level of service (LOS) for roadways in the study area based on 2008 traffic counts which are not expected to improve and may even worsen as the area develops. Based on the aforementioned information, Mr. Horton reviewed a map showing all of the identified needs for the area. They included both City and State roadway projects and farm-to-market upgrades.

State road projects are identified and ranked in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) which is adopted by the Charlotte metro region's local Metropolitan Planning Organization. The current plan has been updated for 2035 and the projects listed are only those priorities that the State anticipates having the necessary funding to construct through 2035. Currently, no projects for the Steele Creek study area are listed and this includes the widening of Steele Creek Road/HWY 160, formerly identified in the 2030 LRTP.

Most city projects are expected to be built either as development occurs or through the City's Farm-to-Market program, which has very limited funding. Typically the types of improvements made to City streets that qualify are sometimes turn lanes, curb and gutter, sidewalks, planting strips, street trees, bike lanes, and medians. As the area grows, more demand will be put on this program and the transportation options will either have to be addressed on the supply or demand side. In short, they will be addressed either by more roads and multi-modal connections or by better integrating land use with transportation.

The *Transportation Action Plan (TAP)* and *Urban Street Design Guidelines (USDG)* can be found online by visiting www.charmeck.org/Departments/Transportation. Additionally, the *Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)* can be found online at www.mumpo.org. Lastly, the meeting presentation, existing area plans, and the *General Development Policies* may be viewed online at www.charlotteplanning.org.

Transit

Mr. Ramond Robinson, Charlotte Area Transit System, highlighted the current bus routes and park and ride locations for the Steele Creek study area. He then reviewed the 2007—2012 Countywide Transit Service Plan for the area which includes plans for bus route extensions and modifications most likely serving employment centers and a NC 49 Park & Ride lot at Rivergate Shopping Center. Criteria for future bus route extensions and modifications include ridership demand, budgetary considerations, low impact locations for stops, and the need for significant origin(s) and/or destination(s).

Community Design

Ms. Michelle Jones, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department, relayed back to the group what staff had heard from them regarding community design. Staff heard that screening and landscaping are useful as buffers along roadways, but in other instances seem unnecessary. She also reported back that signage sometimes limit sight distance, distract from building and can cause visual clutter. With regard to pedestrian connectivity, some CAG members preferred asphalt to concrete, that they work with existing topography, internal site connectivity, creative pedestrian connections, and bus stops with no waiting areas. Mrs. Jones closed with a review of existing Community/Urban design policies approved in 2003 as part of the City's General Development Policies

(GDP). She focused on single family and multi-family developments as well as retail and mixed-use developments. The GDPs may be reviewed online at www.charlotteplanning.org.

Concept Map Exercise

Mr. John Howard, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department, led this group exercise. The purpose of this exercise was to start developing preliminary land use recommendations for the plan, specifically in the context of the draft vision for the area. It was explained that the concept plan will incorporate or synthesize the land use, transportation, community design, and environmental visions for the community. After reviewing the vision statement, the group began identifying existing concentrations of various land uses and looking for opportunities to preserve and expanded those uses. Then, the group was asked to start identifying areas where new opportunities or uses could be appropriate. Due to time constraints, the exercise will be continued at the next CAG meeting.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Mr. Brent Wilkinson advised the group that they will be contacted in the coming weeks about the next advisory group meeting date and location. It is expected to be held mid to late January 2010. The focus will be refinement of the Land Use Concept Map.

The meeting presentation may be viewed on online at www.charlotteplanning.org.